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ABSTRACT

This study represents an attempt to relate activist ideology to behavior in settings that are not explicitly political. Two characteristics, interpersonal trust and a need for ethical consistency, were translated into empirical questions and studied accordingly. Subjects were undergraduate college students who scored low or high on the New Left Scale and the Political Activities Scale. Results of the experiment indicate that (1) activists demonstrate greater interpersonal trust than do conservatives, and even when that trust is diminished by interaction, activists appear more willing to acknowledge their opponents' strengths; (2) activist students more readily admit ethical transgressions, when confronted, than do more conservative students; and (3) components of primarily political attitudes can be related in predictable ways to behavior in situations that are not explicitly political in nature.
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NEW LEFT BELIEFS, TRUST IN OTHERS, AND INSTRUMENTAL CHEATING[1]

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Out of necessity or design behavioral scientists have for years studied college students, usually with the aim of discovering principles that would generalize to other populations. Following the Berkeley Free Speech Movement in 1964, some investigators began to focus their attention on a particular segment of the student population: political activists on the left. Most of these studies concerned the personality characteristics (Flacks, 1967), family background and childhood experiences (Trent and Craise, 1967; Keniston, 1967, 1968) of activists as compared to more conventional students. More recent work in the area has been directed toward determining the impact of radical actions on other students (Teger, 1970; Epstein, Suedfeld, and Bresnahan, 1970; Kornberg and Brehm, 1970), and the components and coherence of new left political beliefs (Christie, Friedman, and Ross, 1969).

As yet, however, there have been few attempts to relate activist ideology to behavior in settings that are not explicitly political. The data of Christie, et al. identify five general characteristics of the New Left activist personality. First among these is the acceptance of certain tenets of New Left philosophy -- the oppressive nature of "establishment" institutions, concern for social progress, and for participatory democracy. Other facets of the ideal type include support for revolutionary means where necessary to change the system; denial of Machiavellian interpersonal tactics; rejection of traditional moralism -- the sanctity of private property, commitment to a career, the value of sexual regulations (especially marriage); and finally,

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th, assertion of a high degree of trust in other people as individual human beings.

At first the latter two characteristics -- denial of traditional moralism, and interpersonal trust -- might appear contradictory, since personal dignity and the norms and laws accrued over time to protect that dignity are both part of Western cultural heritage. Alternatively, it could be argued that unchecked proliferation of such regulations has obscured the importance of the individual person whom they were originally formulated to protect. Indeed, the strong reactions of many activists to social hypocrisy, and the essential humanism of the New Left Movement (see, for example, Fishman and Solomon, 1964; Sampson, 1967; Keniston, 1968) argue for the latter interpretation.

Interpersonal trust and a need for ethical consistency can be translated into two empirical questions: In a laboratory situation designed to engender mistrust, do activist students demonstrate more trust in others, even opponents, than do more conservative students; and when provided with an opportunity to condone cheating in order to secure a reward, do activists succumb more or less than more conservative subjects? A variation of the Prisoner's Dilemma (PD) game (originally described by Luce and Raiffa, 1957) was used in an experiment designed to evaluate these questions. It was predicted that activist students (operationally defined as high-scorers on Christie et al.'s New Left Scale and a Political Activity Scale) would evaluate both their partners and their opponents as more trustworthy than would conservatives (low-scorers), and in addition would show greater readiness to admit what transgressions did occur.

Method

Subjects

The subjects were males selected from a large sample of William and Mary resident undergraduate students by their responses to a form of the New Left Scale (Christie, Friedman, and Ross, 1969) and a Political Activities Scale (PAS) both administered by mail six weeks in advance of the experimental sessions. The PAS requested biographical and opinion data -- presidential preferences, participation in various civil rights and peace activities, political self-descriptions -- that Christie, et al., among others, have found to be related to New Left Attitudes.

These questionnaires were distributed to a total of 339 undergraduate students (191 males, 148 females) who were either randomly selected or were members of student political organizations. Questionnaires were returned by 141 males, 55 (or 82%) of the random group and 86 (62%) of the organization sample. From all of these male returns the 20 highest-scoring and 20 lowest-scoring on the New Left Scale (with each of the 78 items keyed according to the factor loadings reported by Christie, et al., so that agreement with an item would be consistent with a New Left position) who had comparable scores -- top or bottom third -- on the PAS were selected as a subject pool for the experiment. An automobile accident to one of the confederates cut the number of subjects actually run to 19, one of whom failed to perceive the manipulations, and one of whom expressed suspicion, leaving a total of 10 activists and 7 conservatives.

Procedure

Subjects were run individually with either of two confederates, each a senior psychology major who had been carefully trained to cheat in a prescribed manner on a prediction task that accompanied play of the PD game.

Two confederates were used to counterbalance for possible differences in perception of partner: one was long-haired and dressed in the local style of campus activists, the other had short hair and "straight" dress.

The experimental sessions were conducted in a moderately sized laboratory room, one wall of which was a one-way vision screen entirely covered by an opaque curtain. Subjects were not observed during play of the PD game, but the entire sessions were tape-recorded by a concealed microphone to facilitate scoring of the subjects' responses to the cheating of the confederate. Any verbal responses associated with the confederate's cheating were transcribed and the tapes of the sessions were erased following completion of the experiment.

The experimenter was kept blind regarding the actual scores of subjects on the New Left Scale and the PAS, though in some cases visual cues could have been suggestive. She began the experimental session by telling the subject and confederate that as part of a study of "group interaction theory" they would play 50 trials of a PD game against another pair of subjects located in an adjacent room. This deception was reinforced throughout the procedure by additional references to the other team, by programmed presentation to the subjects of the other team's PD choices, and by appropriate absences of the experimenter during pre-game and post-game instructions to "check on the other team." Extensive pretesting revealed almost universal acceptance of the second team's presence.

As an ostensible preliminary to the beginning of the session "because of its possible importance to your play of the game" the subject and confederate were asked to record their first impressions of each other on a series of ten bipolar adjective scales (e.g. weak-strong, bad-good, trustworthy-untrustworthy). These measures served to assess interpersonal

trust prior to any experimental manipulations.

After the first-impression measurement the experimenter explained that she was interested in "how well two people play [the PD game] together," pointing out that the usual procedure was for a single individual to play against another individual. Subjects were then shown the possible payoffs in a decomposed PD matrix: AA = +3¢, +3¢; AB = -3¢, +10¢; BA = +10¢, -3¢; BB = -1¢, -1¢. They were told that in addition to playing the PD for 50 trials, they would also be required to predict the other team's choice on every trial "as part of our attempt to learn more about strategies of play." Then the experimenter stated that to "insure careful attention to the prediction task" any team which reached 70% accuracy in their predictions would receive a $10 bonus in addition to whatever earnings they made from play of the PD.

The experimenter then went on to explain the actual play of the PD and the operation of the electric signalling equipment that would permit her to identify the beginning of each trial to the teams, to see each team' response on that trial, and to notify each team of the other's choices. It was pointed out that because of some limitations in the equipment the predictions would have to be recorded by one member of each team. Through an appropriate ruse the confederate was always the one chosen to do the recording. It was emphasized that the experimenter would signal the beginning of a trial simultaneously to each team, and that for this reason the predictions were to be recorded prior to the play on any trial.

During play of the game the confederate subtly cheated on the prediction task. Simply by waiting until the results of a trial were known and then recording the prediction, the confederate could insure a correct answer. By following this procedure a few times -- on three specified occasions and as many additional trials as necessary -- the confederate made sure that

the team reached the 70% criterion. At least once he said "I'm going to wait on this one ..." and justified his action. A predominant tactic was for him to disagree with the subject's prediction, thereby delaying the recording until after the results were known. Since one of the team had been correct in these instances, success could readily be rationalized.

All subjects played the PD game against a restricted random series of 25 "A"s and 25 "B"s. Outcomes on each trial were recorded by the experimenter, who simultaneously noted any spontaneous remarks by the subjects that indicated awareness of the confederate's behavior, encouragement of it, or resistance to it.

In addition to recording whatever spontaneous comments each subject made, the experimenter noted his reactions at five points during the session, and these responses were scored as a measure of honesty. The first of these points was at an interruption of play after trial 25. There the experimenter simply inquired "How are you progressing?" and "Do you have any questions?" Any responses were noted for later coding. The second opportunity for honesty occurred after trial 50, when the experimenter again entered "to see how you have done. Did you enjoy playing the game? How did your predictions come out?"

After recording any answers to these questions, the experimenter asked the subject and confederate to complete another impression questionnaire, identical to the first, in order to evaluate the <u>opponents</u> "based on how they played the game." Since the opponents had, in fact, been a programmed series, this evaluation served as a second measure of interpersonal trust. Having discovered, with apparent surprise, that the team had reached the 70% criterion, the experimenter then left to check the predictions against her record of the outcomes and to obtain the bonus (ten one-dollar bills).

The third opportunity for honesty occurred when the experimenter returned with the bonus, stated just a bit incredulously that "Your predictions do match my record of the outcomes," and continued I still have to finish tallying how much each team made on play of the matrix, so I'll leave you the money for the predictions in the interim. It should only take a few more minutes." The experimenter then placed the money on the table between the subject and confederate and left the room, leaving them to decide how to divide up the bonus. In those cases where the subject did not immediately take the money to make the decision himself, the confederate suggested an even split.

When the experimenter next returned, more direct and intensive questioning of the subject began. Under the guise of learning about the team's strategy during play of the game, she asked several general questions regarding strategy and then proceeded: "Finally, I have found that some teams said the results were flashed up too fast -- that the game was too fast-paced. Since the situation has occurred in previous sessions, I am curious if you had any problems with the speed, or any tendency to wait on the predictions until after the results had flashed?" Although this question was purposely directed to both players, only one subject failed to answer it himself -- even though the <u>confederate</u> had always been responsible for recording the predictions. This represented the fourth opportunity for the subject to reveal the transgression.

Finally, the subject and confederate were separated in order for the experimenter "to find out your honest impressions of each other after the game." After a general question about the subject's impression of his partner and the opponents, the fifth and last opportunity for revelation was presented to the subject by repeating the prediction question: "I also

wanted to ask you while you were alone if everything was all right in getting the predictions down -- if there was a problem with waiting. Was there anything going on that I should know about?"

The debriefing following the experiment was two-stage. Immediately upon conclusion of the session subjects were encouraged to express their ideas and feelings about the study. They were reassured, in the course of post-experimental questioning, that the experiment had purposely been designed to promote condoning of cheating, that care had been taken to make such behavior appear natural in the context, and that all subjects did condone the confederate's cheating to some degree. The fact that the confederate was part of the experiment was revealed, and he and the experimenter together tried to work through whatever dismay the subject expressed at the nature of the study. At the conclusion of this extensive post-experimental interview the subjects were thanked for their participation, paid $2, and pledged to secrecy. The entire procedure required approximately an hour, including the interview.

Though all of the deceptions involved in the actual experimental procedure were carefully revealed and fully explained in the interview, the fact that the subjects had been selected by their scores on the New Left Scale and the PAS was revealed at that time only to the few subjects who asked whether there was any connection. After all of the available subjects had been run, the experimenter personally contacted each subject who had participated to inform him of the method of selection and to determine whether there was any residual upset over the nature of the experiment. Although there were no clinical interviews of subjects, there was no evidence that participation in the experiment produced any lasting damage.

Results and Discussion

If it is true that activists of the political left are characterized by a high degree of trust in other people, then on the first-impression ratings at the beginning of the experiment activists should have perceived their partners to be more trustworthy than did conservatives. These rating data are presented in Table 1, and show that this prediction

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Insert Table 1 about here

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was strongly confirmed (t = 2.53, df = 15, p .025).[3] Regardless of the confederate's physical appearance the activist subjects thought him more trustworthy than did the more conservative students. In addition, the data show that activists tended to rate their partners more positively on the good-bad dimension (t = 1.85, df = 15, p .10). It is interesting to note that these specific findings were not simply part of a more general halo effect: none of the other first-impression scales showed differences that even approached significance.

It appears that activists approach an interaction with more interpersonal trust than do conservatives. Does this trust persist even through competition with others? The relevant data -- ratings of opponent trustworthiness -- are also shown in Table 1, and reveal no differences between activists and conservatives. Not surprisingly, a repeated measures analysis of variance (Winer, 1962) showed that both subject groups perceived the opponents to be less trustworthy than they had found their partners (F = 30.52, df = 1/15, p .001).

In other ratings activists judged their opponents to be stronger (t = 3.13, df = 15, p .01) and more intelligent (t = 2.21, df = 15, p .05)

than did conservatives. These ratings suggest that activists may be more willing to acknowledge their opponents' strengths, even while their usual predisposition toward greater interpersonal trust can be modified by competitive interaction.

Regarding ethical consistency and admission of transgression, the findings are also in accordance with the predictions, though they are less conclusive than the interpersonal trust results. At each of the five points in the experimental procedure when an opportunity to confess was provided -- the three free responses before distribution of the winnings, and the two points of direct questioning after payment -- each subject's response was independently coded by both authors. Each response was judged according to a seven-point scale that ranged from "Active Honesty" (direct and frank admission of transgression, scored as 7) to "Active Cheating" (direct statements designed to conceal transgression, scored as 1). The interjudge reliability of this measure was substantial (r = .83), and where discrepancies occurred the two ratings were averaged.

Two composite scores were then computed for each subject. The honesty scores from the first three confession opportunities, where any admission would have been on the subject's initiative and might have interfered with completion of the experiment, were added together into an index of Voluntary Confession. The honesty scores from the fourth and fifth confession opportunities -- direct questioning at the conclusion of play -- were also summed into an index of Prompted Confession. The findings for each of these measures are presented in Table 1, and show that while the activists were not more willing to "fink" on their cheating partners during the course of the experiment (t for Voluntary Confession = .75, df = 15, p .50), they did appear more ready to confess upon questioning by the experimenter

(t for Prompted Confession = 1.77, df = 15, p .10; Mann-Whitney U = 16, p = .06, corrected for ties).

The results of this experiment indicate that activists demonstrate greater interpersonal trust than do conservatives, and even when that trust is diminished by interaction, activists appear more willing to acknowledge their opponents' strengths. These findings are consistent both with the data of Christie, et al. and with the general nature of the activist personality as noted by Flacks (1967) and Trent and Craise (1967). Further, the findings suggest that activist students, at least in this sample, more readily admit ethical transgressions (when confronted) than do more conservative students. Finally, the results show that components of primarily political attitudes can be related in predictable ways to behavior in situations that are not explicitly political in nature.

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Footnotes

1. This paper is based on a thesis submitted to the College of William and Mary in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the A. B. degree with Departmental Honors. Requests for reprints should be sent to Kelly G. Shaver, Department of Psychology, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia, 23185.
2. Now a Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
3. All probability values reported in this paper are based on two-tailed tests.

Table 1

Impression Ratings and Honesty Scores

Measure		Activists (n=10)	Conservatives (n=7)
Impression Ratings of Partner			
Trustworthiness[a]	$\bar{X}$	6.30	5.14
	SD	.45	1.48
Goodness	$\bar{X}$	5.70	4.71
	SD	1.12	1.24
Impression Ratings of Opponents			
Trustworthiness	$\bar{X}$	3.80	3.43
	SD	2.62	2.62
Strength	$\bar{X}$	5.00	2.86
	SD	2.00	1.81
Intelligence	$\bar{X}$	4.80	3.29
	SD	2.18	2.57
Honesty Scores			
Voluntary Confession[b]	$\bar{X}$	6.60	5.14
	SD	23.21	24.36
Prompted Confession[c]	$\bar{X}$	5.10	2.07
	SD	14.71	8.20

[a] Impression ratings are 7 point scales

[b] Voluntary Confession index scores are out of possible total of 21

[c] Prompted Confession index scores are out of possible total of 14